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HD WIDENER



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When He Bringeth In The FIRST
BEGOTTEN. He saith And let
ALL The Angels of GOD worship Him.

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FROM

Miss Gertrude R. B. Richards

GABRIEL
THE ARCHANGEL

BY THE AUTHOR OF "S. JOSEPH THE FOSTER-FATHER "
AND "JUDAS ISCARIOT."

**GABRIEL
THE ARCHANGEL**

**AND THOSE
TO WHOM HE SPAKE**



**DANIEL THE PROPHET
ZACHARIAS THE PRIEST
MARY THE VIRGIN**



**NEW YORK
EDWIN S. GORHAM
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1902**

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Miss Gertrude R. B. Richards

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GABRIEL

THE ARCHANGEL



FIVE HUNDRED years elapse between the recorded advents of the Archangel Gabriel; but it is the same mighty Prince of the Heavenly Hierarchy who stands again upon the earth.

He, unchanged by the hand of time (for time is not in the realms of bliss), is the same spiritual being who was sent by the mysterious Voice to interpret to "Daniel, the greatly beloved," the vision on the banks of the Ulai, and who came centuries later to Zacharias, "the righteous before God," amidst the gorgeous ritual of the Temple at Jerusalem; and again to the "highly favored" and ever Blessed Virgin of Nazareth.

To Daniel he was made known by the command from on high, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision."

To Zacharias he announced his name and office: "I am Gabriel that stand in the Presence of God."

To the Blessed Virgin it was sufficient that he

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came from on high; her faith and humility needed no further proof. "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy Word."

He who came thus had descended from the court of the Heavenly King; he had come from an environment filled with the Divine life of the Holy Trinity; he had come from an atmosphere of love, pure, satisfying love, unstained by sin-polluted matter, replete with all the attributes of the Godhead. From the realms of perfect bliss, he came to the doubts, the discords of earth; his mission, to announce God's love and mercy toward men. His office had none of the mystic power of "the great Prince," S. Michael, who comes before us as the great leader in the struggle against the strong but fallen Powers of Evil. He fought against the Prince of Darkness, and his mission seems to have been to carry out the Divine Decrees. One Archangel announces God's purposes; the other enforces them.

"Michael," writes Dr. Pusey, "is a sort of watchword or challenge to all idolatry: Who is like God?"

The first half of Gabriel corresponds to the word "Geber," translated "man," and signifies "man of God" or "man God"—the strong man of God.

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Daniel is the first writer who records the names of angels. The two Archangels, Michael and Gabriel, named by him, are the only two found in the Canon of Scripture; others are, however, mentioned in Apocryphal writings several centuries after those named by Daniel. Volumes upon volumes have been written by learned men in past centuries upon the subject of the Holy Angels, and the obedience, order, and positions of the angels are taught in the collect for S. Michael's Day as a matter of express doctrine. In God's Household all are given their exact place, their special work, and individual responsibility.

We read of one angel having power over fire, another over waters; others stand at the four corners of the earth and hold the four winds of Heaven (Rev. xiv. 18, xvi. 5, vii. 1).

Daniel tells us of countries which seem to have an Angel Prince to guide them, and particularly of the Angel Prince who was sent to enlighten him with regard to his nation's welfare. All that Angels do, all their recorded acts, partake of two parts: worship or service. "Praise the Lord all ye angels of His, ye that fulfil His commandment."

Consider their humility. S. Gabriel's one claim

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to authority was that he stood "in the Presence of God." When John the Beloved would have worshipped the angels, he said: "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant . . . worship God."

But alas! pride and self-assertion in some resulted in eternal separation from God's Presence, and the Book of Jude shows us the heinousness of the sin which entailed such awful results. Many writers say their sin was so great because there was no bodily temptation; it was sin of a spiritual character against God the Holy Ghost. With no seduction to sin they committed spiritual suicide, and wrought total ruin in the then highest ranks of being. Their fall was an awful proof of the existence of evil and of what a total wreck sin could make of God's servants.

In the Excursus in Speaker's Commentary on the "Angelology of the Book of Daniel" we read: "The antiquity of the belief in angels is not now disputed. The foundation of this doctrine is recognized as laid in times far anterior to the Captivity in Babylon. In considering the derivation of the name, the idea is Semitic. The Hebrews had from the earliest ages been taught to believe in beings of a nature superior to man,

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messengers of the Most High and executors of His orders. . . . In the pages of the Book of Daniel may be seen the angelological conceptions so extensively permeating the writings of later Judaism. To Daniel may be traced a distinct expression of their attributes."

"We say," writes S. Gregory, "there are nine orders of Angels, because we know this from Holy Scripture. Angels, Archangels, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim" (so described by S. Paul in his letters to the Colossians and Ephesians). . . . "But it is to be known that the name Angels is a designation of office, not of nature. For those holy spirits of the celestial country always indeed continue spirits, but cannot by any means be always called angels, because they only are angels when through them some tidings are made known. . . . Moreover, those who make known lesser tidings are called angels, but those who make known the greatest are called Archangels."

For hence it is that to the Virgin Mary is sent, not an angel, but the Archangel Gabriel. "For on this ministry it was worthy the highest Angel should come who announced the Highest of all things."

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“ The Strength ” or “ the Strong Man of God ” came to tell of the coming of the Almighty Son of God whose strength was made manifest in lowliness and weakness.

All that Daniel the Prophet wrote about the angels was proved authentic by Law and Prophecy, and two hundred years before he lived the great Isaiah saw God surrounded by Seraphim, six-winged spiritual beings ; his contemporary, Ezekiel, describes others, and long prior to these we recall Joshua, the great leader of Israel.

He, the Captain of the Hosts of the Lord, saw Michael the Prince of the Heavenly Army. Picture the marvellous scene, as Leader of celestial and terrestrial army meet !

“ And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand ; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ?

And he said, Nay ; but as Captain of the Host of the Lord am I now come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant ?

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And the Captain of the Lord's Host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.

And Joshua did so." (Josh. v. 13, 14, 15.)

To many more persons than can be mentioned here have the Holy Angels appeared. We read of their ministrations to the King of Glory Himself as He lay prostrate in agony in Gethsemane, and to the weakest and youngest of his subjects, of whom He said: "Their angels do always behold the Face of My Father which is in Heaven."

Angels came to men, clothed in a material embodiment and in a human form.

They were created in full adult completeness, their numbers never added to; made complete at their creation. Though spiritual and ethereal they came to man's dull eyes in a distinct form, and are represented as passing through the air by means of wings. Daniel writes, "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the Vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation."

These holy spiritual beings exist about the Throne of God, Who is the only Self-existent Being, and *Who is Spirit*, not a *Spirit*. He sends

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them forth as His messengers, each with his own personality, to be used as His will directs.

“ To Thee, all Angels cry aloud ; the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.

To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory.”

Let us now reflect on the three messages delivered : to *Daniel*, to *Zacharias*, and to *the Blessed Virgin* ; the cause of the coming of Gabriel the Angel of the Incarnation, and the purport of his words.

INTRODUCTION

DANIEL,—PRINCE, STATESMAN, LOYAL SERVANT, PROPHET AND INTERPRETER OF THE DIVINE DECREES.

“The scene of Daniel’s life,” writes Dr. Pusey, “was laid in a great theatre: on one side was the world-monarchy, irresistible, conquering, as the heathen thought, the God of the vanquished. On the other, a handful of worshippers of the One Only God, captives, scattered, with no visible centre or unity, without organization or power to resist, save by their indomitable faith; inwardly upheld by God, outwardly strengthened by the very calamities which almost ended their national existence.” (Daniel the Prophet, vii.)

Of Daniel, too, it was said: “His eye illumined with Divine life ranges over the outspread chart of universal history and contemplates Eternity.”

He wrote to encourage his nation in times of trial, captivity, desolation, and sorrow. “We sat down and wept when we remembered thee, O Sion,” mourned the captives on the banks of the Chebar.

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Punishment for forsaking the Lord their God had fallen upon the disobedient nation, and Daniel seeks to cheer them with Divine Hope; he would have them study their past history, and gather faith, love, and trust for that which was to come. God would hearken unto His people.

He stood as one holding the mysteries to be revealed, as S. John did later on at Patmos.

By his example he taught his people to be calm, earnest, and prayerful; to believe in the coming of Messias. "No one can doubt," says S. Jerome, "that he prophesied of Christ by Whom transgression was closed up and everlasting Righteousness was proclaimed, which overcame the rigor of the Law, and Vision and Prophecy were filled up. The Law and the Prophets were till John; and then the Holy One of Holies was anointed."

To trace rapidly the history of this great Prophet:

In the year 604 B.C. he was carried away as a mere child from Jerusalem to the heathen court of its conqueror.

With three other young boys Daniel was subjected to the stern discipline of Nebuchadnezzar's household.

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By his wonderful gifts he rose step by step to the highest positions, first in Babylon, then in Persia.

He founded what is called "the Apocalyptic writings," which ended in the words of the Prisoner of Patmos.

This style of writing treats of symbols and images.

He wrote of the four great world Powers falling to ruin; and that upon their ashes should rise the Messianic Kingdom.

It has frequently been noted that Daniel, unlike all the other Prophets, was rather a medium of revelation than a messenger sent with words of certain and direct import.

His Book is placed in the Hagiographa, between Esther and Ezra, not with the Prophets as in the Hebrew Bible. Its introduction is written in Hebrew, also other parts are in that language and in Aramaic (Chaldee).

It is divided into two Parts—1st, Historical, comprising Chapters I.–VI.; 2d, Prophetic, describing visions and warnings.

He would have his people know that, though captive, the Lord would deliver them, and show them how futile were the most powerful efforts of

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world-monarchs when opposed to His Almighty Will. Before their eyes their enemies should be brought to naught.

Briefly to summarize the twelve chapters comprising his Book:

I. to VI. His captivity, power of revelation, refusal to worship image, humbling of Nebuchadnezzar before him, handwriting on the wall interpreted by him, cast into the lions' den.

VII. Vision in first part of Belshazzar's reign; sees Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires under form of four beasts; Gabriel sent to him.

VIII. Celebrated vision of Ram and Goat.

IX. The Archangel Gabriel comes again to him to announce to him the mysterious delay in the Incarnation in the "seventy weeks."

The remaining chapters give an account of another vision in the third year of Cyrus; of four Persian Kings, and of Alexander; the subjugation of Syria as a preparation for coming of the Messiah; the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and his last vision.

His Book reveals a new manner of prophecy, and the New Testament vouches, as it were, for each part of it. Its miracles (Heb. xi. 33, 34).

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Its predictions (S. Matt. xxiv. 15). Its doctrine of Angels (S. Luke i. 19, 26, and the Apocrypha).

Both Church and Synagogue give authoritative use to the Book.

It was most devoutly read by the early Christian Church and was quoted by the Lord Himself (S. Matt. xxiv. 15).

Only the modern critic doubts.

Commentators are almost innumerable: Rabbinical, Patristic, with Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and many German, French, and English writers.

Rosenmüller writes of four hundred and fifty, but is said to fall short of the actual number of critics.

Turning away from finite man's opinion of the marvellous deeds of an Infinite Creator, let us recall the fact that the words of Daniel, inspired by the Holy Ghost, were quoted by the Wisdom of God, by the Word of God, that Word Who, from "the beginning, was God."

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In Daniel, so frequently called in the Holy Scripture "the greatly beloved," we see a man chosen from his childhood to fulfil a marked and holy vocation. A Prince of the house of Judah, at the downfall of Jerusalem he was carried a prisoner to Babylon, and subjected to all the direful temptations of a heathen court.

A boyish faithfulness and innate holiness, and obedience to the laws of his God kept him pure and unspotted amidst great corruption. It was unlawful for an Israelite to eat meat slain with the blood and connected with idol worship, therefore he refused to eat of "the King's meat," confident that God would uphold his strength.

Faithful in fasting, he was also faithful in prayer; for although the Holy City lay desolate and its Temple in ruins, yet he prayed three times a day facing the spot sanctified by the Presence of the Lord his God. How earnestly he prayed may be gathered from his words: "And I set my

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face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."

Obedience to God taught him deference to those in authority; difficult as it must have been for him even to tolerate the cruel, overbearing, unreasonable mandates so often issued by fanatical Eastern despots, we find him using gentle, respectful words in dealing with those who uttered them.

After explaining one of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, compassion filled his heart for the arrogant Ruler of the world. "Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him" . . . he foresaw all that was to come, and sorrow overcame him: the King had to encourage him to speak, then: "Belteshazzar answered and said, My Lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." Later he pleaded with loving earnestness: "Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." A year passed; the King's pride and self-sufficiency increased.

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The King spake and said: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the Kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

Then, "While the word was in the King's mouth, there fell a Voice from Heaven saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the Kingdom is departed from thee." The end of his glory had come: "great Babylon" was soon to become "an heap."

We see Daniel showing exactly the contrary spirit. No honor showered upon him disturbed his gentle humility. Untouched by the adulation of the mighty of the earth, unmoved by his importance as chief adviser of the ruler of the gigantic Empire, his thoughts were for his God and for his nation. The great power held in the hands of those he served affected him not one whit. It was nothing to him that Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshipped; or that Darius commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him; or that—Darius "labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." When the King could no longer save him from the lions to whom his enemies, envious and jealous of his power, had cast him:

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“Then the King went to his Palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him.”

These same enemies witness to his holy life, a life lived in the full light of a court, surrounded by pitfalls, the seduction of flatterers, the tempting bribes of office-seekers, false friends, bitter foes, vacillating support from his master, and by those who looked with envious hate on the foreigner who was brought as a slave into their country, yet who now held the most exalted position in it. But how do they testify as to the purity and integrity of his life?

“Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God.”

To the offer of being made the third ruler in the Kingdom, “Daniel answered and said before the King, Let thy gifts be to thyself and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the King and make known to him the interpretation.”

The gift of Divine Prophecy had been given him, but it was too precious to be exchanged for a reward.

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Note, too, his fearlessness in rebuking the mighty monarch, whose decrees were published "unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth." Regardless of power and venomous enemies, who watched every action and listened to every word from his mouth, he says:

"The secret which the King hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers shew unto the King:

But there is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

As we trace Daniel's holy life we see how his correspondence to God's Will fitted him to be the intermediary between God and man and to receive a mighty Prince as a messenger from the Throne of Heaven.

It was the love of God in his heart which made him worthy to receive Gabriel the Archangel, "the Strong Man of God."

Bishop Ken in his sermon on Daniel, preached at Whitehall before the court, A.D. 1685, says:

"It was the love of God which made this 'greatly beloved' Daniel prosperous in adversity, that gave him freedom in captivity, friends among enemies, safety among infidels, victory over his

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conquerors, and all the privileges of a native in strange countries.

"It was the love of God that gave His 'greatly beloved' knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom and understanding in all visions and dreams. It delivered him from dangers, from conspiracy and malice of the Median Princes. It saved him from the fury of the lions.

"It was the love of God that sent the Archangel Gabriel to visit him, to be his interpreter, to strengthen, comfort, and encourage him; to reveal secrets and to assure him his prayers were heard.

"It was the love of God which gave him the Spirit of Prophecy, that excellent spirit, 'that Spirit of the Holy gods,' as the Babylonians styled it."

The sermon goes on to compare "Daniel the greatly beloved" Prophet with John the Beloved Disciple. Both had a like love for God and knowledge of Heavenly things. Both were lifted in spirit far above earth, in lofty flights into the unseen.

Daniel saw "the Ancient of days"; John, "One that sat upon the Throne." Daniel saw Visions growing in beauty and holiness as they led up to

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the thought of the coming Messiah; John saw "the linen clothes lie and the napkin wrapped in a place by itself, and believed." Daniel prophesied of the Stone cut without hand that should break in pieces the Image great and terrible and scatter the pieces like chaff of the summer threshing floor. John saw the great and terrible Powers of evil appear to conquer on the Cross, but on Easter Day their Prince who had assailed the Lamb of God, through the evil passions of men, became as naught.

Daniel wrote: "And in the days of these Kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever" (Dan. ii. 44).

This Kingdom is in the world to-day. It is added to in such mysterious ways that men note not the increase. The Decrees of the Everlasting God roll onward. Babylon has become "an heap"; Median, Persian, Grecian, Roman Empires have passed away; "God made Man" has come upon the earth. The Branch from the Root of Jesse has spread its shadows and given its leaves for the healing of all nations.

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"God is King of the Ages, and the history of ages will reveal His Will."

Through Daniel He vouchsafed a revelation which was for all time.

Daniel, being in a trance or ecstasy, seemed to be in the royal Palace at Susa, as Ezekiel speaks of being in a vision at Jerusalem. (Chapter viii. 2.)

He thought himself to be in the great Fortress or Palace of Shushan or Susa (The City of Lilies) about two years after seeing the Vision noted in Chapter vii. of his Book, the well-known Vision of the Four great Beasts.

This city was of extreme antiquity (2280 B.C.). The great traveller Layard discovered a bas-relief showing it surrounded by a wall with towers and gates. It is supposed to have been three hundred miles east of Babylon, and was a royal residence of the Persian Kings. It was in the Province of Elam, by the river Ulai, supposed to be the modern *Kuran*.

In the vision words of great mystery are heard by Daniel. The Ram with the two horns was the Medo-Persian monarchy. The He Goat from the West was the King of Javan, or Grecia, Alexander the Great.

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Wars, desolation, and desecration of the Temple were revealed to Daniel, and he sought for the meaning.

“Then I heard one Saint speaking, and another Saint said unto that Certain Saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the Sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” (Dan. viii. 13.)

That Certain Saint, The Concealed, the Hidden One, One discerned but not named. Learned men have thought that he was no other than He Who said to Manoah: “Why askest thou thus after My Name, seeing it is secret?” He Who is the Wisdom of the Father and Who reveals His Wisdom to the world is the Eternal Logos. Daniel writes: “And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of Ulai, which called and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the Vision” (viii. 16).

(Who else but Almighty God would command an Archangel?)

“So he came near where I stood: and when he came I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision” (viii. 17).

Between the banks on the swift-flowing waters

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the Voice is heard, and the words float toward him like mists driven forward by the rising sun.

The Voice once "still and small" addressed to Moses, to Daniel was as "the Voice of a multitude," to S. John as "the Voice of many waters." As the words reach him, Daniel, overcome with fear, falls prostrate before the Holy Angel as he came near to where he was.

Then with tender sympathy he is raised up by the touch of Gabriel, and set upon his feet and told of the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom; how they should for a time "stand up." But when transgression is come to the full, a King of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences shall stand up. He was to be mighty, but not by his own power; he was but an instrument in God's hands.

Daniel was to warn the chosen people that this King Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 175) would be the first persecutor of the Church of God in its spiritual character.

This King had once been a hostage in Rome, but had escaped and usurped the throne of his nephew Demetrius.

His coming, his stealthy advance to Jerusalem, his cunning, his clever plots, his seduction of the

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Priests, his false promises, his oppressions, and the sacrilege done by him are well known.

“All these things,” says Josephus, “our nation suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes.”

In the Book of the Maccabees he is described as entering Egypt with great multitudes, with chariots, elephants, and horsemen, and a great navy, and Ptolemy was afraid and fled.

This ruthless Conqueror took away from Jerusalem “the Golden Altar of Incense, the candlestick, and the Table of Shew-bread, and the golden censers, and the Veil, and the silver and gold, and the precious vessels, and when he had taken all away, he went away into his own country, having made a great massacre. . . . Many of the Israelites consented to his religion and sacrificed to idols, and profaned the Sabbath, rent in pieces the Books of the Law, and sacrificed swine on the Altar.”

S. Augustine writes: “The stars fall from Heaven whenever persons, who seemed to shine by God’s grace in the firmament of the Church, and who ought to be like firm-set constellations guiding men in their voyage over the troubled waters of this world to the calm harbor of Heaven, apostatize from the truth, and wander like wild and

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fitful meteors in the lurid sky, and are at last quenched in gloom."

Such was the work of the Little Horn of Daniel's vision. Antiochus trod under foot those whom he had tempted to become renegades, and by him "the daily sacrifice was done away."

His people being found unworthy of His love, Jehovah will leave them desolate. "The Prophecy," writes Bishop Wordsworth, "concerning the man melts away and expands into a prophecy concerning the Anti-Christian of the latter days."

The power of Alexander, too, had been great, so great that he ruled the whole earth. God permitted him to govern for a time; then in twelve short years, "when he was strong, the great horn was broken." At the age of thirty-two years, in the very height of his glory, he died at Babylon; that Babylon which had witnessed the end of another King's glory.

Gabriel the Archangel having explained the vision, now tells Daniel to "shut up the vision," to seal it carefully so that it might be kept safely.

Consider how safely! through centuries long past and by hands turned to dust ages since—and to-day we have it as clearly as when the Voice was upborne on the waters of the Ulai.

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Then—"I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the King's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." (Dan. viii. 27.)

None understood it. The Dreamer Daniel might publish the account of his supposed visit from an Archangel from Heaven called Gabriel, but who would believe it?

How the statesmen of the day must have scoffed at the thought of all which was foretold.

How astonishing and improbable must have been his revelation concerning Greece, a country scarcely heard of at the time of the Prophecy. It was an unknown territory. That it should have a *King* was in itself marvellous; but that he should dare to attack the invincible, the gigantic power of the East seemed incredible. The East so powerful, so vast, so supreme!

No wonder, as Daniel prophesied, "none understood it." How was it possible that a man from a distant, disunited, discordant Province should rule the ancient, dignified Empire of the East and should make laws and decrees and govern with all the despotism of their own mighty Kings?

An Alexander was an impossibility to them.

But, in the light of to-day, how our faith should

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be strengthened, when we see that prophecy has become History; for all History is sacred and shows us the working out of the everlasting decrees of an everlasting and Supreme God. All things that have transpired in the past, affecting, as all history does, the spiritual welfare of man, have been written by prophets inspired by God to warn men. Men fulfil their vocation if they correspond to His Will. A Daniel, as well as an Alexander, are both instruments in His Hands.

Gabriel was sent to make Daniel understand the words he heard floating between the banks of the Ulai; both were emissaries created to do His Will; Archangel and Prophet, celestial and terrestrial beings were to fulfil His commissions.

All History tells us of the ordering of an Almighty Being; without this thought how chaotic would be the study of the past, and how impossible to understand the rapidly changing events of our own time.

The Everlasting Decrees of an Eternal and Almighty God silently move onward establishing the Kingdom of Christ which shall exist even unto the end of the world. Missionary zeal, adventure, war, science, all are made to work to this end. The all-powerful "He goat" of Daniel's Vision

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brought the world a step nearer in preparation for the first Advent, and opened a way for the "Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world."

Five centuries later Our Blessed Lord came upon the earth to set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed and of which He speaks in the Prayer He gave to all the world, "*Thy Kingdom come.*"

A second time the Holy Archangel Gabriel comes to Daniel, we find the account in the ninth chapter of his book. In the first year of Darius, about the year B.C. 538.

For sixty-eight years Jerusalem had been in captivity, and Daniel thought that her release must be at hand: a hope intensified by the prophecy of Jeremiah. So he wrote: "I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the Great and dreadful God"—and his prayer continues in the same strain of penitence throughout the chapter until . . . "Whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched

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me about the time of the evening oblation " (ix. 21). " And he informed me, and talked with me and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding " (ix. 22).

It is to be noted that while Daniel *was praying* the Angel came instantaneously.

" In sackcloth and ashes " (says S. Jerome) " he prays for what God has promised; not that he did not believe God's promise, but he prayed lest security might beget negligence, and negligence might provoke indignation."

Man's will must work together with God's grace. S. Gabriel came to tell Daniel that because he was " greatly beloved " what was obscure to other men should be made clear to him. He addressed him as " Ben Adam," son of man, to remind him of his earthly state; for although he was exalted to hold converse with God and Angels, yet he was but man.

At the second coming of the Archangel we do not hear of the intense fear and alarm which marked his first visit to Daniel. Holy joy and confidence seemed to have taken its place.

As we picture the scene of Daniel's very natural fear and perturbation in the presence of an angel, we wonder what shall be our feelings when we shall

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be called to stand in the Presence of the Eternal and Almighty God.

Created man fears in presence of created Angel; what shall man feel in the Presence of his Omnipotent Creator?

Daniel, loved, honored of God, fainted and was sick "many days"—his bodily frame was unable to bear the environment of glory which overwhelmed his whole nature. He so holy, so devout, so true a servant of God, could not bear this revelation of the supernatural.

His life was one ever lived apart from his own country and from his own people; he was content to labor for them, to guard them, and to pray for them while in continual exile.

How incongruous must have been the voluptuous surroundings of a heathen court; far, how very far, must have been his life from that which he would have chosen, but "I have chosen you; ye have not chosen Me," were words in force long before they were uttered by our Blessed Lord to the Disciples. Long ere their time one servant of God after another had heard a call to a special vocation—and answered. Abraham to leave his country; Moses to lead his people out of Egypt when he was told of God, "Speak thou unto Pha-

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raoh, King of Egypt, all that I say unto thee," although but a short time before we read, "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since Thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. iv. 10). A rebuke follows: "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (iv. 11, 12).

In Daniel's holy life we read of no hesitation in fulfilling God's will—no complaint at captivity, no murmur when left in exile when his people returned from the Captivity, and he saw the miracle of a whole nation set free in the reign of the great Cyrus.

Prayer, fasting, and the love of God filled his life. It was marked by miracles. He was most miraculously preserved in great danger, from the teeth of lions, from the venomous attacks of all the magicians and soothsayers of the Babylonish Court, as a foreigner in a strange land amidst those envious of his statesmanship, amidst those jealous of the King's favor, and amidst those who

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in their hearts despised him for being of the nation of the Hebrews, of whom their armies had made slaves. But in spite of all these dangers he stayed on to watch over and guard by his influence the little Kingdom of Israel embedded amidst mighty Empires and surrounded by ruthless foes.

At times it seemed as if the Remnant of the nation (saved, as foretold by Isaiah) must perish; foes pressed in on every side, and alas! worse than all outward danger, discord, factions, and unfaithfulness to their God threatened from within.

With what heartfelt gratitude must he have heard the words of the Mighty Archangel assuring him that his nation's desolation should be but for a time. Then, elevated by faith, cheered by hope, emboldened by love, he thought he saw the very near approach of Messiah, he thought the fulness of time had come; but the holy Messenger warns him the world was not yet ready for Him.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” (Dan. ix. 24.)

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These seventy weeks are supposed by learned commentators to number 490 years.

Daniel's writings are among the most wonderful preserved to us.

He told of Messiah and the time when He should come, when He should be cut off, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of Antichrist, of the Kingdom without end, of the Day of Judgment, of the Resurrection, of Heaven and Hell.

Many writers have drawn attention to the fact that because Daniel's prophecies have been so literally fulfilled they were doubted. Josephus esteemed Daniel the greatest of Prophets, and, as has been before stated, The Word, The Wisdom of God declared him to have been one; but, to quote our Blessed Lord's words, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by *Daniel the Prophet*, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand,)

"Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:" (S. Matt. xxiv. 15, 16). Words almost identical in S. Mark xiii. 14: "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by *Daniel the Prophet*, standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains."

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It is scarcely possible to believe with this testimony before our eyes that modern critics doubt.

The holy Daniel, so greatly beloved of God, was vouchsafed great mercies, and the visions gave him great moral courage.

He, the Prime Minister of a mighty Empire, the Chief Ruler, the popular statesman, the man so versed in the fickleness of a king's favor (having known what it was one day to be thrown into an abyss filled with lions, and next almost exalted to a throne), risked all his popularity, all his power, all his influence by ceaselessly warning his people against unbelief in God's decrees.

He prayed to the God of his fathers to "Hear," "Hearken," and to forgive. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do." He has been called "the Prophet of the latter days," for his last vision was seen as late as the third year of Cyrus (B.C. 534).

His faithful boldness and supernatural wisdom are several times referred to in the Old Testament, and his book was well-known to Ezra, to Nehemiah, and to Zechariah. It extends over seventy years.

It portrays Christ our Lord as Our Redeemer, as the Almighty Ruler, and the Universal Judge. Bel, Nebo, and Merodach seemed many times more

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powerful than Jehovah, but the writer's faith remained unshaken.

Godet, in a few concise words, gives to us the characteristics of the four great Prophets:

"*Isaiah* may be compared to a majestic oak overshadowing with its boughs the palace of the Kings of Judah in the time of prosperity.

Jeremiah is like a weeping-willow whose branches hang down to the ground in the midst of the ruins of this deserted palace.

Ezekiel reminds us of one of those aromatic plants whose vivifying odors perfume the country and revive the heart of the fainting traveller.

Daniel is like a tree rising out of the midst of a vast plain, which may be seen from all sides, a signal to guide the Caravan on its march."

To Daniel, the receiver of God's decrees, the guide, the supporter of his people, was vouchsafed, as to S. John, a Vision of Christ, one of those mysterious Theophanies thought by the earliest Fathers to be The Word, the Son of God; by others, Apparitions through intermediary agency of a created being.

S. Augustine denied that the Son of God could be visible till the Incarnation. Jewish writers differ very much in their views; but the general idea

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accepted by the Church (writes Canon Liddon) is that the Theophanies "were not direct appearances of a Person in the Godhead, but self-manifestations of God through a created being."

In Daniel's last recorded words he tells us of the vision of One clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, who said to him, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. . . . But go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

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"I am Gabriel, that stand in the Presence of God."

When we read of the second coming of the Archangel Gabriel to man, some five hundred years have passed since he appeared in Elam (Dan. viii. 11). Then, cruel, unreasoning Eastern despots ruled "every people, nation, and language"; now he came to find the world under the stern, hard rule of a great Western power, that of Rome.

All things were changed.

Babylon the Great had fallen.

All that the Archangel had been sent to foretell *had* come to pass.

The Empires of Babylon, Syria, Media, Persia were no more. Alexander, the King of Grecia, or Javan, *had* conquered the world.

Antiochus IV. Epiphanes, the Illustrious (also called in mockery "the Frantic"), whose reign had been so clearly defined by Daniel as marked by treachery, he having, as had been foretold (Dan. xi. 21), "obtained the Kingdom by flatteries," *had* ravaged the Church of God, and

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finally died a miserable death in Persia, a victim to terror and remorse.

And now Gabriel stands again upon the earth. All untouched by time, he comes to Zacharias in the glorious Temple of Herod: so called because restored by him after forty-six years' labor. It was the third Temple erected on that site, and rose high above the city of Jerusalem, its snow-white marble walls and brazen gates glittering in the gorgeous light of the early Eastern sun.

Alone and apart from aught else in this city of Palaces stood the Tabernacle of God.

From the valley beneath, terrace upon terrace rose up to the four principal gates. Its pinnacles towered toward Heaven, and from distant Kedron appeared lost in its blue depths. Rabbis could never say enough of the splendor of this glorious and beautiful House of their God. Its pillared cloisters, its magnificent courts, its Solomon's Porch (all that was left to remind them of their nation's former glory), its Beautiful Gate, and its stately approach furnished endless subjects for reverential pride and joy.

It stood the adored of all Jewish hearts; with joy and adoration the Israelite beheld the smoke of the perpetual sacrifice ascending up into the

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fair, blue sky, for it told him, wherever he might be, in whatever far distant land, the propitiatory lamb was being offered for him. He knew, too, that in the Holy Place day by day sweet incense would be offered up upon the Golden Altar, typical of the prayer the exiled Jew might ever offer to his God.

But, alas! the glorious spectacle was not untouched by sorrow and alarm, for overlooking, and indeed commanding it, stood the Tower of Antonio, filled with hated Gentile soldiers, a foul blot on the scene, and a daily reminder to the Israelite of the subjugation of his country and of the insults offered to his God; for had not the hated, the detested conquerors even desecrated the very Temple itself by hanging up in its portals leathern bucklers bearing an image of their Emperor, whom they claimed to be divine?

The walls of Jerusalem were indeed strongly fortified; sixty square towers of marble guarded the one side, forty the other, but—*the foe was within*. The Roman conqueror manned the forts, and at any time could be seen the glitter of his armor as he marched to and fro. Many soldiers were on duty, for tumults among the fanatical Hebrews might break out at any time. Jerusalem

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was in a seething state of rebellion and discontent, and internal factions disturbed and almost rent asunder the Holy City, once called "the foundation," "the abode," "the inheritance of Peace, Sireh-Shalem Jerushalaim," Jerusalem the City of Peace.

Century after century had the Israelite, as he came up to the great Feasts, stood entranced as he gazed upon the City of the Great King, and "marked well her bulwarks" and "considered her Palaces." But now discord dwelt within.

The self-righteous Pharisee, dwelling in externals and overcome with pride and conceit, cared little for the welfare of his nation. Its growth, its order, its sanctity were less to him than his own righteousness and the width of his phylactery; he saw no merit in other men; wrapped up in self, he thanked God that he was not as they were; arrogant and bigoted, he lived in the petty observances of the Law, and had lost the spirit in the letter of observance.

The Sadducees were indifferent and unbelieving; the Essenes, semi-heathen and fanatic; the People desiring a national government, but not united enough to enforce it, bitterly hating the foreign foe, but powerless to throw off the yoke.

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One sect, one party, assailed and plotted against another.

The faith itself in many hearts was almost dead. Rabbis distorted it, the High Priest and his family disgraced it, and tradition well-nigh killed it.

Sadly typical indeed was the Roman soldier of the foe within the gates.

The sin of its rebellious, stiff-necked people was about to be visited upon their heads.

Prophet after prophet had arisen, and warning after warning had been given, but they had heeded them not.

Thus it was that discord marred the fair beauty of earth as the Portals of Heaven opened and Gabriel sped down on his way to the dwellings of men.

How great must have been the joy of the Heavenly hosts. Later, Our Blessed Lord said there was joy in Heaven over *one* sinner that repented; how inconceivably greater must have been their delight when one of their own mighty Princes was sent to announce the coming salvation of the whole world.

To the Priest Zacharias should the glad tidings first be given; his son, the Forerunner, was to prepare the way and turn many to the Lord their God.

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From the holiest place human imagination may picture, the Presence of God, Gabriel came, and found man approaching his Creator in the way He had commanded, through sacrifice offered by an intermediary Priesthood; that Priesthood dating back to the time of Aaron.

S. Luke, "the Evangelist of the Atonement," begins his Gospel with an account of the Levitical Priesthood, and describes the ritual of the Temple and its earthly Priesthood as being preparatory to the Heavenly, when Christ should inaugurate the everlasting Priesthood on the great day of His Ascension. He tells us that Zacharias was righteous before God, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"; and also that he was the last of his family, having no son to succeed him in his holy office. Before describing the events of the great day in which the holy Angel came to him, a few words may be given to the preparation for the Jewish Priesthood, its grand conceptions, and its magnificent office. Zacharias at twenty years was eligible, and on presenting himself before the Sanhedrin, "in the Hall of Polished Stones," was examined and required to produce genealogical proofs of his claim to the office.

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Then followed an examination for physical defects, of which Maimonides says there were one hundred and forty which would ever exclude the candidate, and twenty-two which might be overcome in time. If rejected, the candidate was clothed in black; if accepted, in white. It would seem that S. John had this in mind when, in his Revelation, he wrote:

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life.”

“The white material in which the Priests were clothed came from the looms of Egypt, and had a glistening and shining appearance; it was called ‘byssus.’ A literal translation of Rev. xix. 8 would be: the Wife of the Lamb, the Church, should be clothed in byssus vestments, shining and pure; the byssus vestment is the righteousness of the Saints.” (Edersheim.)

Four white garments were given the accepted candidate—coat, woven in one piece, breeches, girdle, and bonnet; these, when soiled, were not washed, but were torn into wicks for the Temple lamps. They were only worn when on duty. Investiture, not anointing, inducted a man into the office.

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Long before daybreak on the wonderful day of the Archangel's descent from Heaven, the Temple courts had been thronged with Priests and Levites, for, tradition says, half of the twenty-four Courses were obliged to live in Jerusalem. These Courses dated back to the time of David (1 Chron. xxiv. 7-18), although after the Captivity they were divided up into more or fewer subordinate ones, and yet were so numerous that each Course could only serve in regular rotation. The Course of Abia, or Abijah, was on duty on this great day, and great suspense reigned among the Priests, for one of the assembled number was to be chosen to perform the office of casting incense upon the Golden Altar—an office so honorable, so important, that it could come but once in a lifetime. The ceremony of casting lots, which should determine this selection, is described by Dr. Edersheim (Temple Services, p. 120):

“In the Hall of Polished Stones stood the priests in a circle round the president, who for a moment removed the head-gear of one of their number, to show that he would begin counting at him. Then all held up one, two, or more fingers—since it was not lawful in Israel to count persons—when the president named some number, say

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seventy, and began counting the fingers till he reached the number named, which marked that the lot had fallen on that priest. . . . The third lot was the most important. It determined who was to offer the incense. If possible, none was to take part in it who had at any time previous officiated in the same capacity. . . . He on whom the lot fell chose from among his friends two assistants, and approached first the Altar of Burnt Offering. One Priest filled with incense a golden censer held in a silver vessel, while another placed in another censer burning coals from the altar. As they passed from the Court into the Holy Place they struck a large instrument (called the Magrephah), at sound of which the Priests hasten from all parts to worship, and the Levites to occupy their places in the service of song.

“Slowly the incensing Priest and his assistants ascend the steps to the Holy Place, preceded by two Priests, who had formerly dressed the Altar and the Candlestick, and who now, after worshipping, withdrew.

“Next one assistant reverently spread the coals on the Golden Altar, the other arranged the incense. They also withdrew, and the Priest was left alone in the solemn silence of the ‘Holy Place.’

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“On the day when the great revelation was made to man, according to custom, the dawn had been looked for from a pinnacle of the Temple.

“If the Priest on watch reported ‘the morning shineth already,’ he was asked again: ‘Is the sky lit up as far as Hebron?’ If he replied in the affirmative, preparations were made for the sacrifice, and the lamb was brought from a room where it had been kept four days.

“The Elders who carried the keys gave the order for opening the Temple gates. As the last gate slowly moved on its hinges, the Priests, on a signal given, blew three blasts on their silver trumpets, summoning the Levites and representatives of the people (called ‘stationary men’) to the great gate of Nicanor, where those to be purified that day were placed.

“The sweet-sounding blasts from the trumpets were also signals to the city that the lamb for the morning sacrifice was about to be offered.”

But to-day it is the Holy Place to which our thoughts turn, rather than to the daily sacrifice.

The Holy Place contained *the Golden Altar of Incense*.

The Golden Candlestick.

The Table of Shew-bread.

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The Golden Seven-lamped Candlestick, reminded Israel that it was guided by a pillar of fire in the wilderness, also that God is Light. Later the Son of God was to proclaim Himself as Light: "I am the Light of the world." He, the Life of Life, by whom "came Light into the world," had thus been symbolized since the Tabernacle stood in the wilderness centuries before He came to cast His bright beams of light upon the earth.

The Table of Shew-bread, or "Bread of the Face," or "Presence of God," was placed upon a golden table given by the Maccabees to replace the one stolen by Antiochus Epiphanes B.C. 176, when, during the abomination of desolation, he plundered the Temple and the daily Sacrifice was taken away. (Dan. viii. 11.)

The Bread stood in dishes made of gold, and was regarded by ancient tradition as an emblem of the Messiah; the bread laid before Him signified that the worshippers lived before Him. It was renewed weekly, and was baked in twelve loaves of flour, sifted eleven times.

"And thou shalt set upon the table shew-bread before Me alway." (Ex. xxv. 30.)

Minute directions had been given for the making of the table in the Tabernacle in the wilder-

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ness. It was to be made of shittim wood and covered with pure gold; and of the bread, it had been said to Moses: "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even as an offering made by fire unto the Lord." (Lev. xxiv. 5, 6, 7.)

It was to be placed every Sabbath "before the Lord," and to be eaten only by the Priests. "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons; and they shall eat it in the Holy Place; for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." (Verse 9.)

The Candlestick was also made of pure gold: "Of beaten work made he the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers." (Ex. xxxvii. 17.)

The Altar of Incense was made of shittim wood, "overlaid with pure gold, both the top of it, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns of it: also he made unto it a crown of gold round about." (Ex. xxxvii. 26.)

"And he made the holy anointing oil, and the

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pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary." (Ex. xxxvii. 29.)

It is said thirteen substances were used in its composition, and 368 pounds were used in the course of the year.

When Zacharias stood in the Holy Place, about to perform his mediatorial act, he stood "without the Veil of the testimony," before the Golden Altar, and near by stood the Table and the seven-lamped candlestick. He was to offer the Incense, but two other mediatorial acts were performed prior to his entrance. Priests had presented the Bread, and lighted the lamps with fire taken from the Altar of Burnt Offerings in the outer court (believed to have been ignited by the Pillar of fire from Heaven itself).

Israel was sinful, and could not come to Jehovah but in the way He ordered; and the Hebrew word for Priest, "Cohen," meant one who mediated in the name of another. Thus the nation was taught to approach its God through penitence, mediation, and reconciliation.

Malachi wrote: "The Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.)

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During the performance of their mediatorial acts, the Priests in the Holy Place were protected from intrusion by closed doors. These doors were of great strength, and were covered with gold. Josephus writes: "Such gates wanted nothing that could give an idea of splendor, since the plates of gold of great weight reflected the rays of the morning sun with a dazzling brightness from which the eye turned away overpowered." When these gates were thrown open all was seen as far as the great Veil, which, glittering with a surface of beaten gold, interwoven with brilliant colors, shielded the most Holy of Holies. It was of great thickness; yet it was this Veil, untouched by human hands, which was so mysteriously "rent in twain" when Jesus Christ, the Anointed High Priest of God, entered the Holy of Holies once for all on the day of His crucifixion, when the Veil of His Flesh was rent at the hands of those who for so many centuries had guarded that which had typified it.

S. John Chrysostom reverently wrote: "When the veil was rent the Holy of Holies continued open, so the Body of Christ, when torn by His Passion, opened to us the Heaven which was closed." S. Leo—"that the Lord, by this rending, showed us

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plainly that the old Priesthood was ended, and that the old sacrifices were abolished and a new law set up."

Zacharias realized that by the mediatorial act he was to perform he was to aid in bringing his people in union with God; by sacrifice, the whole nation was to become holy. "Holiness to the Lord" was engraved on the forefront of the mitre worn by the High Priest.

Men honored those of Priestly descent; and Jewish records, both religious and secular, tell us how deeply the office was cherished and how carefully family records were preserved. Josephus emphasizes this: "My family was not without esteem, but of Priestly descent." As holiness was to come to Israel through the mediation of the Priesthood, Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth, or Elisheba, could not but have mourned that no son of theirs would have a share in this great office of bringing some of their nation nearer to their God.

The following prayer would have been uttered by him after entering the Holy Place:

"With great love hast Thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with much overflowing pity hast Thou pitied us, Our Father and our King, for the sake of our fathers, who trusted in Thee, and Thou

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taughtest them the statutes of life, have mercy upon us and enlighten our eyes."

Alone in the Holy Place, Zacharias now stands clad in sacerdotal robes of pure white linen; with covered head and unshod feet he stands before the Golden Altar of incense, about to engage in an office never again in all probability to be repeated by him.

A solemn hush reigns throughout the Temple, and its outer Courts, for we read "the whole multitude were praying without," worshipping before the Lord in silent prayer, while through the Priests they offered mediatorial sacrifice.

Consider how often in silence has the Creator signified His Will toward men.

In Bethlehem the silence of the Holy night is broken by the voices of the Angels. In Nazareth holy calm reigns in the lowly carpenter's cottage, in silence pass the thirty years spent there, disturbed only by the thoughts of the slaughter of Bethlehem and the rude turmoil of Egypt. In silence the Holy Saviour walks beside the lovely shores of the sea of Galilee, presently to utter the words, "Follow Me."

In the silence of the mountain top He holds converse with the Father.

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In the silence of the night He sinks prostrate on the ground in the agony of Gethsemane, and utters the loving reproach, " Could ye not watch with Me one hour? " typical of the longing, the craving He felt for the love of those whom He came to save.

In the silence of the night traitorous steps approach, and perfidious lips dare to touch His Most Holy Face.

In silence He stands before the iniquitous Caiaphas, the perfidious Herod, the cowardly Pilate; and breaks it only to show that His Kingdom was not of this world.

In the silence of the night, in the new tomb in the garden, He conquers Death and Hell and passes through the sealed stone,—as later He passed among His Disciples when " the door was shut for fear of the Jews "—those disciples to whom He had sent the message: " I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."

He is afterward seen of S. John. " And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the Altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense,

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that he should offer it with the prayers of all Saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." (Rev. viii.)

Picture that marvellous silence in Heaven, pre-figured on earth by the silence in the Temple; the whole imagery derived from the worship of earth. One of the seven which "stood before God" is supposed to be he who was now about to approach the Holy Place, and to proclaim himself a messenger from Heaven.

"I am Gabriel, that stand in the Presence of God."

Minute by minute passes. Zacharias worships in reverent adoration; no sound is heard; priest and people are silent. Then Zacharias, thrilled with the mighty service devolving upon him, pours the grains of sweet incense upon the living coals; and it was as it were "the igniting of the prayers of all Israel by the fire of the Holy Spirit."

"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the Altar of incense.

"And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisa-

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beth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

“And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.” (S. Luke i. 11, 12, 13, 14.)

His greatness, his austerity, his holiness, his power in preaching are then foretold, and his great mission announced. He was to “make ready a people *prepared* for the Lord.”

Thus again Prophetic Voice broke the silence of five hundred years. But, alas! Zacharias doubts.

“And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the Presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” (S. Luke i. 19, 20.)

“In their season.”—Long years had passed since Gabriel had last visited the earth; now the advent of the herald was announced by him and all past events in the history of the world were kindled with the bright glow of holy fire and shone with the Divine Light of the wisdom of God. Prophets had written in the luminous rays of His

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far-off Presence, but now His prophet John was soon to speak of Him in the full light of His Bodily Presence. For a Spiritual was to be substituted a Local Presence. The Son of Zacharias was the chosen medium for making known this stupendous fact to the world. The Heathen all sought to know the future by divination, black art, magic, charms, signs, auguries; but God's people looked only to Him, and from Him came everything supernatural. He revealed His Will to man through instruments chosen according to their correspondence to His grace; the herdsman of Tekoa speaks with as profound wisdom as the princely and keen, far-sighted statesman Isaiah. One, indeed, in crude sentences, befitting a goatherd; the other in words of majestic cadence and perfect symmetry, makes known the Will of his God.

In the Holy Place, on the right side of the Altar of incense, now stands another messenger; the glorious form of an Archangel stands near the Veil of the Holy of Holies. He stands there in majestic presence, half veiled and enveloped by the ascending clouds of fragrant incense; its soft, fleecy folds shielding him in a measure from the gaze of the man who trembles as in great fear at his coming.

So Holy Archangel gazes upon Levitical Priest.

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The silence between them is broken by a revelation from God, and the words, "Fear not, Zacharias," are mercifully said to remove a very natural fear of a supernatural appearance. Other words full of love and consideration are also uttered; the one great sorrow of his life was about to be done away: "Thy prayer is heard and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."

But, alas! despite these words so full of promise, he believes them not.

His righteousness was not sufficient for the hour, nor his faith and trust in God; now, like the heathen, he is to be given "a sign." His tongue, which but a short time before had joined in the most solemn words of prayer and praise, was to become dumb and inarticulate before his God.

How many times must Zacharias have said the words, "Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy Law." Now, one of God's greatest creations stands before him, and he doubts. Compare his faith with that of the Blessed Virgin Mary when the same Archangel came to her. Man's faith must nearly always have been disappointing to God.

Note the degrees of faith of those who stood later about the Lord in the Temple. To some the Voice

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from Heaven was a crushing, dull, inarticulate sound, and they said that "it thundered." To others the sound was of angelic sweetness, breathing vaguely of joy and holiness, but without definite meaning, and they said, "An angel spake to Him." But to Blessed John, "the Beloved," the words of the Father are clear and articulate, and he records them as one to whom their full sense and power has been revealed and their meaning vouchsafed. (S. John i. 12.) *Each man hears God speak in his own language; that is, according to his spiritual understanding.* Wonderful, fearful thought! Zacharias the Priest stands before the Archangel of God as a type of the unbelief of a fallen church, her understanding dull, her hope weak, her faith well-nigh gone. Where now was the trust of Abraham, the gentle true love of Isaac, the faithfulness of Joseph? True—many there were who were yet faithful in Israel, but her footsteps had well-nigh slipped.

Zacharias must have been familiar with the words uttered some five centuries before (Mal. iv. 5, 6): "Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to

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their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

We must remember that S. John Baptist was identified with Elijah by Christ Himself (S. Matt. xi. 14): "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Confused, unbelieving, Zacharias hears the words almost literally repeated by the Angel; but even he, the messenger from Heaven itself, cannot arouse his faith.

Sorrowfully the Angel pronounces the sentence. "And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." (S. Luke i. 19, 20.) The tongue whereby Zacharias had sinned was now powerless; God withdrew from it the power of uttering articulate words; he had wanted a sign. Later, our Lord rebuked the scribes and Pharisees who ask of Him a sign. To them no sign was given save that of the Prophet Jonas; but to Zacharias one of great import was vouchsafed; he could no longer pronounce the Priestly benediction for which the people waited. Those words of sacerdotal blessing so precious to them—"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gra-

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cious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. vi. 24-26) —were withheld from Israel that day.

"And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the Temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the Temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless."

Symbolical, writes Origen, of the Levitical law, now to be reduced to silence by the preaching of the Gospel. (Com. Heb. viii. 13.) "Let the Jew become a Christian if he would recover his speech." (S. Ambrose.)

What must have been that silence to Zacharias as he pondered on the honor vouchsafed him by God, and, alas! his manner of receiving it.

Alone in the Holy Place, in a stillness as mysterious as the speech so lately heard.

Alone, for no longer stands the celestial figure on the right side of the Altar of Incense. How the words, "because thou *believest not*," must have saddened his heart. God had sent His Messenger to tell him he should have "joy and gladness," and he had failed to respond. Not only his own happiness had been foretold, but "many" were to "re-

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joice," and he had cared not for their joy. Thoughts, marvellous thoughts, must have filled his mind during the long interval while "the people waited."

How could the miraculous son to be born to him become such a great power in the world; why should his coming affect so many? He himself, it was true, was of long priestly descent; but at Hebron he was treated with no special regard. What could son of his do for his corrupt church, fallen by its own sins, despite many, indeed endless mercies?

How could he recall his people, gone so far astray from the love of God's commandments? Had they not instituted in their stead endless formalities, petty observances; mint, anise and cummin, the length of a phylactery being more than righteousness of life, and "vain repetition" (after the manner of the heathen in prayer), losing the *spirit* in the *letter* of the Law.

Countless traditions had taken the place, in some hearts, of the terse, concise, all-comprising "*Thou shalt*" and "*Thou shalt not*."

We may suppose that in so holy a man as Zacharias thoughts of trustful joy would, as he meditated, outweigh all others. Jehovah *had* sent His

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Archangel. He, the mighty God of his fathers, *had* visited his servant. He would recall the words he had said as the incense had ascended up.

“Jehovah shall reign who saveth Israel.” This promised son of his was to be called Jehochanan—“the Grace or Favor of Jehovah.” His own name meant “The Lord remembers;” his wife’s Elisheba or Elisabeth, “God’s oath.” One who had said, “I am Gabriel” (a name perfectly understood by a Priest, who would, of course, be familiar with the writing of the Prophet Daniel), had also said, “Thy prayer is heard.” The bright beams of the coming sun of righteousness were about to pierce through the gloom of sin and indifference; they rest upon one holy in the sight of God, and set on fire the true love in his heart. Surely, according to the words of the Angel, this child to be born to him should be the harbinger of the Founder of the kingdom spoken of by Daniel 500 years before (ii. 35), as “The Stone that smote the image and became a great Mountain and filled the whole earth.”

He could, he must be, the Elijah so long looked for by his people; he was to live a life apart from men, and be noted for great courage and perseverance, and to go forth in Elijah’s spirit.

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He was to turn the hearts of the fathers, the Elders so bigoted, so self-absorbed, so self-satisfied, to the wisdom of the just; they who acknowledged no wisdom and needed none but their own. "He was," writes Theophylact, "to turn the Jews to apostles of Christ." "He was to unite the Old and New generation, and be a bond of union between the first and second covenant, being the last of the Prophets and the first of the Preachers of Christ." (Wordsworth.) Later we know he was no reed shaken by the wind in the world of men, but a mighty power for good in the earth, rebuking and guiding the people of God.

While thoughts such as these may have filled the mind of Zacharias, the people wondered why he "tarried so long."

At length he appeared, but "he could not speak unto them." Making signs to them that he was "speechless," he slowly and silently passed through their midst, with none of the holy joy which should have filled his heart at the great and solemn act of sacrifice so lately offered,—and yet joy there must have been (if clouded over as he remembered his own want of faith), for God's promises were sure.

Humiliation at his own faithlessness must have

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been intensified when a son was born to him. Ere this time, however, his faith must have been aroused, for his wife Elisabeth had manifestly had directions from him how the child should be called. Against the expostulations of her friends, she insisted that he should be called "John." This was so contrary to the usual custom of calling a child after his father or some of his kindred that they appealed to Zacharias, although he was still speechless (for even now, for the greater glory of God, he could not speak); so he called for a tablet covered with wax, and with a stylus wrote the words:

His name is John.

By this act of obedience his tongue was "loosed," and God gave him back the power of speech.

At this great miracle of a dumb man made to speak and praise God, we read: "And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him." (S. Luke i. 65, 66.)

His dumbness gone, Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and the power of prophecy.

"When the Voice" (writes S. Greg. Naz.)

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“ comes forth, the father’s tongue is loosed,” “ and the Hymn of Praise which pours forth from his lips ” (suggests Bishop Wordsworth), “ being like the Magnificat replete with Hebraisms, harmonizes it with the Psalmody of the Old Testament. Thus the Voices of the Law and Gospel are heard in concert with each other.”

Zacharias rejoices that the God of his fathers had again visited and was about to redeem His people; the long silence of 400 years was broken, and a Horn of salvation, the emblem of great power (Dan. vii. 7), was to be raised up from the remnant of the House of David, the root of Jesse, as Isaiah had prophesied 700 years before.

Jehovah was now to show man that he had more than fulfilled His covenant with him. His mercy should save him from his enemies, spiritual and temporal, so that he might serve his God “ without fear.”

“ So ” (writes S. Augustine) “ Peter repents, Thomas believes, the Centurion confesses, Joseph of Arimathea is courageous, Nicodemus comes by *day*, the thief prays, and women become strong.” The great “ Day Spring ” from on high was to visit the earth, and we picture Zacharias’s feeling of awe and holy joy as he said, gazing upon the

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son so miraculously given to him, “And *thou*, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the Face of the Lord to prepare His ways.”

His was to be the Voice calling men to repent, but in what a different spirit to the self-righteous Pharisee. It was a Voice teaching poverty and self-denial, but not in the spirit of the fanatic Essene. A voice which rebuked the unbelief and indifference of the Sadducee, and gave wise and just counsels to all conditions of men who sought him in the wilderness.

All conditions—not alone the curious multitude, the people, the publicans, the soldiers, but even Herod Antipas sent to inquire what this Voice was saying.

To the Jews of Jerusalem how surprising must have been the words of the son of Zacharias. They would recall the facts of his birth, his dwelling apart from his father's house, his failing to claim the priestly honors so few then were willing to resign. As his words rang through the solitudes of Jordan, so sparingly inhabited, how they must have passed from mouth to mouth until they reached the ears of the men dwelling in the great city itself. They came to men thirsting for spiritual truths;

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and now, too, had the time come when the words spoken by Gabriel to Zacharias were fulfilled, for "many rejoiced at his birth."

Andrew, Peter, John and James gathered around him as his disciples, and he bade them all follow One greater than himself: for "many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (S. Luke i. 16.)

The Holy Baptist laid on himself many austerities; but there was no upbraiding of the lives of others, no praise of his own mode of life; he did not require others to live as he did. Herod, even, was not told to put on camels' hair, but to put away sin; and "he heard him gladly."

Ere he was done to death in the dungeon of the fortress by the Dead Sea, each prophecy uttered regarding him was fulfilled; he lived, preached, and died for Him who was to give light to them that sat in darkness and to guide their feet into the way of peace.

"Oh that once more, to sinful men descending,
Thou from polluted lips their chains wert rending,
So, holy John, might worthy hymns ascending
Tell of thy wonders.

"Lo! from the hill of heaven's eternal glory
Comes a bright herald to thy father hoary,
Gives thee thy name, thy birth and wondrous story
Truly foretelling."—*Ancient Hymn.*

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“Blessed art thou among women.”

To Daniel the great Archangel Gabriel had announced his commission from God. “And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.” (Dan. x. 11.)

To Zacharias he likewise made known his name and office on his showing doubt.

“And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.” (S. Luke i. 19.)

To Mary the ever Blessed Virgin he merely signified God’s will; and after the first innocent words of surprise at the great honor done her, the words of ready loving obedience flow forth:

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word. And the angel departed from her.” (S. Luke i. 38.)

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When thus for the third time the Holy Archangel visits the earth, he comes not to a gorgeous palace resplendent with all the luxury of the East, as to Daniel in vision at Shushan in the beautiful "City of Lilies;" nor to a Priest in the magnificent Temple of the living God in the Holy City of Jerusalem; but to a poor young girl, unknown and unnoticed in the great world about her, although she was of royal descent. He comes to Nazareth, the name of a place not to be found in the Law, Prophets, Historical Books, or in any of the Poems or Pastorals of the Old Testament. Josephus mentions some two hundred towns and villages in Galilee, but passes by Nazareth—nor is the name to be found in the Talmud.

But why does the Angel go to Nazareth at all? For the Prophets had said Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea; and so the Church of God had to announce when questioned by Herod. This place was far to the southward, with the land of the schismatic Samaritan lying between.

Why, indeed, does the Angel go to so insignificant a village but for the greater glory of God? The King of kings should dwell there, and the lowly should be exalted above all the earth. As we think of the Infinite Power of Almighty God, so

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may we dwell on His Incomparable Mercy shown to mankind.

When the fallen angels were sentenced no more were created; but man God made in His own Image, and when man fell, instead of creating some other order of being, He in His great love prepared from the time of man's fall to send His Son to redeem him, to buy him back to His worship and service.

He might have sent this Son forth from Heaven in the full glory of His Power; but He chose to send Him as a little Child to earth to endure all its pain and weariness, as "a sacrifice for sin and also for an ensample of godly life."

At the Annunciation, man was told God would come to earth and be bound in His Human Nature by all the narrow limits of place. His time should be guided by the daily standard; space should be traversed by Him with the same weary steps that carry men on life's long journey. His form should be like that of other men, but incapable of sin; subject to weariness, hunger, thirst, cold, and defacement, He was to relax in sleep and throb in agony. He was to be so feeble that the Blessed Mother must need support the Infant Feet; yet so strong that the sin of the whole world might rest upon the

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thorn-crowned Head. He should suffer much from the malicious tongues of slanderers, as other men, and be finally done to death at the hands of false witnesses.

In becoming Man, He accepted all the limitations, the trials of earth.

“The world had waited long for Him and when He came it gave Him of the thorns and thistles produced by its own disobedience.” Recall this long time of preparation.

From the time of the promise to Eve till the Archangel's coming to Mary the Virgin at Nazareth some four thousand years had elapsed.

Daniel had thought the time of the Advent near, and implored God to pardon His people and restore His ruined sanctuary. Gabriel was sent to tell him seventy weeks must elapse before Messiah would come. These “weeks,” so mysterious, so incomprehensible, so much discussed—what were they? How long a time did they cover? It is certain that about the time of Christ's birth the Jews generally expected the advent of the promised Messiah. Holy Writ and secular History agree in this. (S. John iv. 25; S. Luke ii. 25, xix. 11, xxvi. 51.)

The older Rabinical writers, such as Solomon Jarchi, declare that the time had been announced

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by Daniel. "The testament of Levi" contains the following passage: "I know from the Book of Daniel that you erred for seventy weeks and sinned against the priesthood . . . finally you will slay Him, not being aware of the resurrection. You will bring His innocent blood maliciously upon your own heads. On His account your sanctuary shall be deserted, shall be profaned down to its foundations, and your place shall no longer be holy; you shall be cursed among the Gentiles, and despair shall affect you, until He shall visit you again and in His mercy receive you in faith and in water."

Origen has written much on the interpretation of the seventy weeks. *Irenæus*, *Hyppolytus*, *Julius Africanus*, *Tertullian*, *Eusebius*, and *Cyril* are not concerned about the number of weeks, but most emphatically maintain that the Prophecy had a Messianic significance and that Christ identifies Himself with the "Son of Man" in the Fifth—the Everlasting Kingdom (foretold in Daniel ii. 44, vii. 13, 27)—and would impress upon all men that He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One. S. Jerome and S. Augustine contend that Daniel's prophecy determined the time of Messiah, of His coming, of His suffering, but they decline to enter

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into any calculation. One great fact is, however, brought before all men, that the Coming had been prepared for.

Soon angels, men, the tossing sea, the roaring winds, the devil-torn lunatic, the sin-stained leper, the deaf, the blind, the dead, and the trembling Devils should recognize the Divine Presence, should feel His Power and obey His Will.

Long years before, the Patriarch Jacob had prophesied that the Sceptre should not depart from Judah "nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

And now, between the little rosy feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, should soon rest the emblem of His power; and the baby hands should grasp the rod of the Shepherd, which should guide His People until He yielded up those loving Hands to be pierced in the fierce noonday heat of His people's hate.

The mystic word "Shiloh" is judged by some writers to mean "the Rest-Giver," "The Prince of Peace." Canon Rawlinson says of the words "The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come": "This prophecy may be considered as fulfilled by the continuance of Judea as an inde-

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pendent kingdom until Rome established her dominion over it in A.D 8 by appointing Coponius the first Procurator."

The Sceptre originally denoted a staff of wood or strong rod taken from a tree and peeled as a wand; and we find it used in Holy Scripture in various ways—for instance: The Rod of correction (Num. xxiv. 17), The Staff of the Shepherd (Lev. xxvii. 32), and for the Sceptre of Royalty. In each of these ways it was used by Our Blessed Lord while on earth; recalling that vision which Jacob saw. The subject must have been one familiar to Jacob, for all Assyrian bas-reliefs represent their kings seated upon their thrones holding the sceptre between their feet. No doubt some such picture was in his mind when he called his sons together and told them what should befall them in the last days (Gen. xlix.). Daniel's prophecy, too, was coming true. The whole world, at the time of the Archangel's visit to Mary, was subject to the Fourth Monarchy; the Sceptre had departed from Judah, for Herod was a vassal of Augustus—and Cæsar ruled the earth. He had foretold the nature of the governing power.

"And the Fourth Kingdom shall be as strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and sub-

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dueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these shall it break in pieces and bruise." (Dan. ii. 40.)

Sore, beaten, and bruised, the Jewish nation lay under the rod, and the iron heel of her conquerors. Egyptian, Assyrian, Mede, Persian, and Grecian kings had held her as slaves; Antiochus Epiphanes the renegade had wrought his will upon her. Alas! for the people, down-trodden but not crushed, returning scorn with bitter hatred, oppression by rebellion, they knew not where to turn for a deliverer. Alas! how pathetic! how pitiful! to think that when He came and would have gathered them in His arms they did but cry in hoarse, malignant hate:

"His Blood be upon us and upon our children."

Despite their sin, their lack of faith, God was caring for His people.

The Divine Decrees had come onward in their slow majestic progress; irresistible, immutable, they bore onward to man the revelation of the Will of God. Why had the Incarnation been so long delayed? Why had the Three Divine Persons seemed to wait, to brood so long?

Types, shadows, symbols, had long signified that Christ was to come.

God seemed to linger.

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Time, some 4,000 years, had passed, and He came not. But what was time to the Maker of the world, to the Creator of the planets? His people, the faithful among them, must watch and wait for His coming.

“It clearly appeareth” (Bishop Pearson writes) “that there was a general expectation among the Jews of a Messias to come, nor only so, but it was counted among them as an article of faith which all were obliged to believe who professed the law of Moses, and whosoever denied that was thereby interpreted to deny the Law and the Prophets” (Art. Creed ii.). The world looked searchingly for Him; later it eagerly questioned S. John Baptist, but he said: “I am *not* the Christ.”

Even in schismatical Samaria the woman who spoke to our Blessed Lord by the well said,

“I know that Messias cometh.”

It was evident, too, from all predictions, that the coming of Jesus Christ should be while the Temple stood.

“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts.” Yet how should this be, seeing it had not the five possessions so dear to a Theocracy?

It had not the Sacramental Urim and Thum-

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mim. The Voice of Prophecy was silent. It had not the Sacred Ark. The fire from Heaven, and above all the mysterious, the glorious Shechinah, was no longer seen shedding Its luminous beams, filling the House with glory. Of Solomon's Temple it had been said (2 Chron. vii. 2):

“And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.”

What, then, should make this Temple of greater glory than the “former one”?

What but the Presence of the All-glorious Son of God?

He comes, the true Urim and Thummim, to reveal the will of the Triune God.

He comes as the Lamb of God, the Sacrifice for sin.

He comes that He may send down fire from Heaven—the Fire of Love—the Fire of the Holy Ghost to kindle anew the cold, well-nigh dead ashes of men's hearts with the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit.

He comes as Prophet to break the long silence of five hundred years—to satisfy the longing of men's hearts. “Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.”

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He comes to found His Church and ever feed it sacramentally with the Shechinah of His Presence.

The Advent is approaching, it is here, and the most stupendous act the world has ever seen is enacted.

God is to be made Man.

That Mary looked for and longed for the coming of Messias is but to say she shared the longing of her people.

She dwelt (as none knew then) at Nazareth; the world knew it not then—but all the world knows it now. Nazareth, nestling amidst green and fertile hills described as rising round it like the edge of a shell to guard it from the rude turmoil of the world, was the home of the daughter of David, the daughter of the house of Judah.

Gay and beautiful flowers adorn its many gardens, overshadowed by fig and almond trees rich in blossom and fragrant in the still night air as Gabriel comes to the humble cottage.

All the rude noises of the village are hushed, the night is quiet and calm, the stars gleam forth with unwonted splendor, all creation is solemnly hushed as the Holy Archangel reaches earth. He comes to ask a creature if she will perform her Creator's Will?

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He will not command—he awaits her consent. He will not coerce her free will; like that of all other mortals it is left untrammelled. He waits the answer, the correspondence of her love, and it comes forth with joy; doubt and hesitancy are undreamed of. The leader of the great band of Saints stands ready to obey. She listens to the Angel's message; as he foretells the glory that should await her Son: if anything earth might offer Him could be so termed. Speaking of His Human Nature he says: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end"—words so full of promise to a daughter of the House of Judah; but that the eternally begotten of the Father would establish in His Divine nature a kingdom which should last through all eternity was more than she may have realized. The words of the Angel must have recalled to the Blessed Virgin the familiar words of the Prophet Daniel, who said: "Behold One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given unto Him dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him: His do-

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minion is an everlasting one which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

God was to be made Man. The instrument had been fitted and prepared: her faith was sufficient. Our Blessed Lord's own words tell us where He was before the Incarnation.

"What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up *where He was before.*" (S. John vi. 62.)

"For the Bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

When we think of the Annunciation we can scarcely help turning our thoughts to the subject of prophecy. All the preparation for the coming Messiah had been made through the Law and the Prophets. The Law, so strict, so binding, was to discipline man's moral nature. Through it he was to learn the great lesson of obedience, that obedience he had refused in Paradise; and through it he should accept the sacraments so long held before him in type and shadow.

As the Law checked man's natural will, so Prophecy was to give him Hope.

All the mysterious incarnations of Eastern religions have been thought to be the outcome of the Messianic promise.

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For long ages past God had been preparing an Instrument. He chose one pure in heart, with a will wholly yielded up. The Will of God was so completely the will of the Maiden of Nazareth, and it was so woven in and upon her nature, that body, soul and spirit were entirely consecrated—all were given into God's Hands by the words:

“Behold the Handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.”

Hope shone brightly forth; she trusted her whole being and placed herself under His care, knowing nothing of the life upon which she was entering. She was alone with God and was absolutely faithful to the vocation to which He called her. She, a young frail girl, was to become, through her obedience the Mother of God, and the leader of the vast company of His Saints.

She was to be guided step by step.

Loving trust and holy fear were to lead her through her earthly pilgrimage to the deep, dark, crimson-stained Shadow of the Cross.

Marvellous humility marked her future life. No word of hers betrays undue exaltation, rather the reverse: for, “He hath regarded the *lowliness* of His handmaiden,” and because of His love He had “magnified” her; yet she in herself had no power,

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no merit; she was content to be still under His Hand, confident that He would uphold her by His strength.

Her faith removed all natural fear: what to her the doubt, the suspicion of the world; what to her the scoff of friend or foe? She knew that in every emergency, every privation, every suffering, every detachment, He was providing for every crisis; for she was in all things absolutely committed to His Will. Unquestioning, she received the message at Nazareth, *not* Bethlehem. How should she have known what the Will of God was? How should she have known that the exigencies of the Roman Empire were to bring about the fulfilment of the prophecy, "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel."

Who could imagine that the vast machinery of a mighty territory and the order of a heathen King could affect this change? But when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria a census was made, previous to the first general taxation as the Sceptre was departing from Judah, and a decree went out from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed; and Mary and Joseph, being of the house and lineage

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of David, went to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be taxed, and there the long-expected Messiah was born.

How incredulous, how enraged, how astounded would the despotic ruler of the world have been had he been told that by the taxing of these turbulent subjects of his he was but carrying out one of the on-rolling decrees of an Invisible but Almighty God!

What to him would be the birth of thousands of Jewish children? Bethlehem, Nazareth were unknown to him; nay, even Judea itself, scarcely remembered by him but as a troublesome dependency of the Empire, filled with a turbulent, excitable, rebellious people. What to him the little Child to be born in his dominions? What did it matter to any Roman where Joseph and Mary should go to be taxed? See in him, too, an instrument in the Hands of an Almighty God.

How impossible of belief would it have been had he been told that a few years hence his successor, the Emperor of mighty Rome, should enter through baptism the Kingdom of that little Child. That Child, arrived at man's estate, announced, "My Kingdom is not of this world;" and except ye become as a little child, ye cannot enter the

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Kingdom of God. How incredible to a wearer of the Purple would have been such humility.

Daniel had told the proud Nebuchadnezzar, so self-exalted by the might of his "power" and "the honor of his majesty," that those who walked in pride God was "able to abase."

So, with the mighty Emperor of Rome, he was to learn that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men."

Compare the Fourth and Fifth Kingdom of Daniel's vision.

The Roman Empire, now at the very zenith of its power, was to be as chaff before the wind in comparison with the stability of the Kingdom to be established by the Holy Child Jesus.

The power of Rome, its extent (and Augustus Cæsar ruled the known world), its learning, its luxury, its wealth, its legions, its navy, its rule in every distant corner of the earth—contrast all these with the Dominion of the Child of Mary.

In power so weak that at first men knew not where to find it. In extent, only known to exist in the Presence of Christ and His twelve friends. It had no territory, not a foot of earth could it call its own: even its Leader had not where to lay His Head.

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Luxury was so little known that life in it consisted of weary marches; its subjects often persecuted, wearied, fainting, and so poorly fed that a few ears of corn gathered from the field sufficed for their needs. They were true of heart, but weak and easily disturbed; and in the great emergency of their leader's life fled from Him in terror, forsaking Him and leaving Him in the hands of His venomous persecutors.

When God was made Man Mary of Nazareth must have longed for the realization of the promises so long made to God's chosen people. He came to substitute a local for a spiritual Presence. The Exalted One had come to one in great lowliness; a mere child, ignorant of the ways of the world, with no power, no influence to protect the Lamb of God born into a world full of ravening wolves thirsting for His Blood. How could she cope with those who (it was prophesied) would persecute Him and finally rend Him to death?

Doubtless danger and distress were rendered dim in the light of her holy faith; that faith which enabled her to *stand* calm and silent beneath the cross stained with the Most Precious Blood of her Son and Saviour, Jesus Christ. No thought of self interfered with the holy obedience with which she

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received the Angel's message—no thought of self marred the last earthly moments spent by the Cross. God gave her His grace—and she used it. God's grace, how marvellous the thought!

It is, as it were, a chain of priceless jewels, let down from Heaven into a creature's hands, free to touch, free to hold, free to use, free to let go! Mary gained gem after gem on her way upward.

The ancient church of her people had had the Urim and Thummim given to the great Lawgiver by God Himself.

The twelve precious stones were like a Divine spirit beaming and flashing forth, visible to the eye, and perhaps audible to the ear of the High Priest when ministering before God.

The Son of Mary was to bestow upon His Church divine grace, to lead her into all truth. He was the Revealer, "The Way, The Truth, The Life," "of whose fulness have all we received and grace for grace." "The Urim and Thummim has been put in us and will dwell in us for ever; we shall shine as holy gems and jewels, and we shall reflect, as in a spiritual mirror, the will and the word of God." (Wordsworth.)

Aquila has translated Urim to mean Illuminations (Baptism, Heb. vi. 4, x. 32); Thummim

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full participation of sacred mysteries (1 Cor. ii. 6).

Countless volumes have been written on the manner in which God spake by the Breastplate; but it was a holy mystery, as was the message of the Archangel to Mary. In her the Divine grace shone forth with undimmed glory; the gems of God's grace were gained by her one by one as she trod earth's perilous journey.

The doubt, the suspicion of Nazareth; the toilsome hill country of Judea; the cold, the privations of Bethlehem; the desert sands of Egypt; the idol-ridden, sun-baked Heliopolis; the fear, the dread, the turning away from Bethlehem; the return to Nazareth, its rough, uncouth people; the doom of the piercing sword, pronounced by Simeon; the separation on her Son's going about "His Father's business;" the anxiety, the apprehension, the fear of the perilous three years of ministry, and their heart-sickening consummation in the Arrest, the three mock Trials, the Way of Sorrows, the hideous jeers thrown toward the Cross even by those who passed by; the vindictive malice and undying hate which were cast, as it were, as a net over the Innocent Victim offering Himself up for the sins of the whole world:—

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These were the sorrows of Mary ; in each and all she re-echoed the words uttered in the holy calm of the silent night in the village of Nazareth :

“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word.”

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